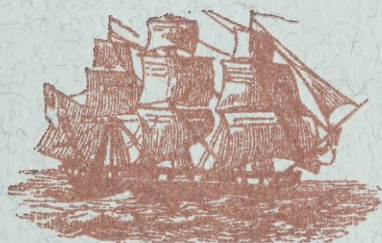


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THE CONTEST FOR THE COMMAND OF LAKE ERIE IN
1812—1813.

BY LIEUT. COL. ERNEST CRUIKSHANK.



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THE CONTEST FOR THE COMMAND OF LAKE ERIE IN 1812—1813.

BY LIEUT. COL. ERNEST CRUIKSHANK.

(*Read May 6th, 1899.*)

Long before the actual declaration of war took place Major-General Brock had foreseen and pointed out that the defence of Upper Canada would be largely dependent on the command of the lakes and that a successful invasion of that province was scarcely possible as long as this remained with the British. In a letter to the Governor-General dated December 2nd, 1811, he remarked :—

"From Amherstburg to Fort Erie my chief dependence must rest on a naval force for the protection of that extensive coast. But considering the state to which it is reduced, extraordinary exertions and great expense will be required before it can be rendered efficient. At present it only consists of a ship and a small schooner, the latter of a bad construction, old, and in want of many repairs yet she is the only King's vessel able to navigate Lake Huron, whilst the Americans have a sloop and a fine brig capable of carrying twelve guns and in perfect readiness for any service."*

In merchant shipping the Americans possessed an undoubted superiority. They had three stout schooners and a sloop of between sixty and ninety tons burden besides five or six smaller vessels, while only five small schooners or sloops were the property of Canadian owners. The construction of a schooner to carry twelve guns which was named *The Lady Prevost* was at once authorized. Brock then urged the superannuation of Commodore Alexander Grant, who was eighty-five years of age and had been in command a full half century, and that two companies of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment should be sent forward to act as seamen and marines.† These precautions, trifling as they were, gave him the temporary control of Lake Erie, for the American Government was

*"Canadian Archives," C. 673, p. 171.

†"Canadian Archives," C. 728, p. 64.

strangely negligent in utilizing its extensive resources in that quarter until disaster convinced them of the necessity.

The services of the only two British ships afloat when hostilities began were by no means inconsiderable although they were weakly manned and not efficiently officered. Captain Hall, who had succeeded Grant in the command, blockaded the United States brig *Adams* at the shipyard in the mouth of the River Rouge below Detroit, where she had been lately rebuilt. On July 3rd, Lieut. Frederick Rolette, a young French Canadian officer in command of the *Hunter*, captured the *Cayahoga Packet* with General Hull's baggage and many official documents of value. He then cruised along the south shore of the lake taking several boats and small craft loaded with provisions and effectually cutting off Hull's communication by water with the coast below from which he expected to draw most of his supplies, and finally on August 7th, he captured a convoy of eleven batteaux having on board the baggage and fifty-six wounded men belonging to a column sent to re-open the communication with Ohio by land.

At the same time the *Queen Charlotte* by her presence in the river alone had delayed Hull's operations and prevented the advance of his siege artillery against Amherstburg while Brock was enabled to send forward reinforcements by water from Long Point and Fort Erie in perfect safety, gaining several days' time and avoiding the fatigue of the overland march. On August 16th that ship covered the landing of the British troops in Michigan while part of her crew manned the batteries opposite Detroit. On the surrender of the garrison the only two armed vessels possessed by the American Government on the upper lakes, the *Adams* and a worn-out sloop, were taken.

Although only a few merchant schooners and a sloop still remained uncaptured and these had been collected at the ship-yard of Black Rock in the mouth of Niagara river where they were blockaded by batteries on the opposite bank, Sir George Prevost still felt far from secure in that quarter.

As early as October 27th, 1812, he informed Lord Bathurst that "The Government of the United States have become sensible of the great advantages we have hitherto derived from our naval superiority on the lakes and are using uncommon exertions to obtain a force superior to ours both on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

"It is necessary I should dwell a few moments upon this circumstance to solicit the attention of His Majesty's Government to that important

part of the defence of Upper Canada. Having already transmitted to your Lordship's predecessor a list of the vessels in commission, I have now to state the difficulties which attend providing them with proper officers and suitable crews. For the present I have allotted the Newfoundland Fencibles for that service and the Quarter-Master General has picked up a scanty supply of sailors at Quebec.

"But the officers are in general deficient in experience, and particularly in that energetic spirit which distinguishes British seamen. In consequence it will be highly necessary in the event of the continuance of the war with America that tried officers of the rank of lieutenant and trusty men from the navy should be appropriated for that service and sent to me as early as possible next spring."*

The *Lady Prevost* had been launched at Amherstburg about the middle of July and as soon as she could be made ready to sail, was sent to Fort Erie to protect that flank of the line of defence on the Niagara while the greater part of the regular troops were withdrawn for the relief of Amherstburg. The *Adams* was put in commission as the *Detroit* soon after her capture and for the remainder of the year all the vessels were chiefly employed in transporting troops and stores, the *Hunter* on Lake Huron and the others on Lake Erie, although there were scarcely seamen enough to navigate them in fair weather.

A return of October 2nd, 1812, shows that there were only six officers, eleven petty officers, eight able seamen and nineteen ordinary seamen distributed among these four vessels, while their regular complement was twelve officers, thirty-six petty officers, forty-four able seamen, and forty-four ordinary seamen. An attempt was made to supply this serious deficiency by putting on board an additional number of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment to act as marines or sailors as circumstances might dictate. Thus the crew of the *Queen Charlotte* consisted of a captain, a surgeon, four petty officers, three able and thirteen ordinary seamen, one volunteer, and thirty-three marines. Her proper complement was six officers, thirteen petty officers, twenty able and twenty ordinary seamen, fourteen landsmen, six boys and seventeen marines. The *Lady Prevost* had three officers, three petty officers, one able and one ordinary seaman, three landsmen, two volunteers and twenty-two marines. Her complement was three officers, eight petty officers, ten able and ten ordinary seamen, two boys, and eleven marines. The *Detroit* was manned by one officer, two petty officers, three able and three ordinary seamen, four landsmen and eleven marines. Her complement was two officers,

*"Canadian Archives," Q. 118, p. 273.

eight petty officers, eight able and eight ordinary seamen, six landsmen, two boys and nine marines. The *Hunter* had two petty officers, one able and two ordinary seamen, one volunteer and seventeen marines. Her complement was one officer, seven petty officers, six able and six ordinary seamen, two boys and nine marines.*

Vessels so weakly manned were scarcely capable of defence when boldly attacked, even by row boats, and the *Detroit* in company with the merchant brig *Caledonia*, while lying at anchor off Fort Erie, was actually surprised and taken on the morning of October 9th, by a party of 124 American seamen and soldiers, in three boats which silently approached under cover of an intensely dark night. The *Detroit* was subsequently destroyed to prevent her recapture, but the *Caledonia* was triumphantly carried off to the Black Rock navy yard, where she was added to the other vessels lying there, which were already being converted into gunboats.

This was, however, the only loss sustained by the British on Lake Erie during 1812, while the advantages secured from the control of the lake cannot easily be overestimated. While the armies of Generals Hull and Harrison were painfully struggling through the swamps and thickets of Ohio and Michigan, with their pack-horses dying by hundreds along the road, their opponents were enabled to transport troops and artillery from place to place with comparative ease and rapidity. The British commanders were accordingly enabled to strengthen the garrison of Amherstburg by troops from the Niagara River, and when danger had passed in that quarter, to take them back in time to repel an attack on the latter line. A part of the 41st Regiment was sent in this way from Niagara to Amherstburg, and was present at the surrender of Detroit. This detachment then returned and took part in the battle of Queens-ton. During the winter it marched overland to Amherstburg, and participated in the siege of Fort Meigs and the battle of Miami, in May, 1813. The ruinous fortifications of Amherstburg on General Hull's approach were hastily armed with cannon from Fort George at Niagara, and a few weeks later the batteries along the Niagara river were mounted with the artillery captured at Detroit. The command of the lake alone made this practicable. The movements of British armed vessels along the south shore of the lake, and the occasional landing of small foraging parties, created indescribable alarm, and considerable bodies of militia were called out from time to time, and maintained under arms at Sandusky, Cleveland, Erie, Chautauqua and Cattar-

*"Canadian Archives, Provincial Marine."

augus. The time for defensive preparations gained by the British was invaluable.

The necessity of securing the control of the lakes for the accomplishment of their plans of conquest had, in fact, been forcibly pointed out to Dr. Eustis, the American Secretary of War, as early as January 2nd, 1812, by General John Armstrong, who was destined to succeed him in office before the year was out.

"Resting, as the line of Canadian defence does, in its whole extent, on navigable lakes and rivers, no time should be lost in getting a naval ascendancy on both, for *cæteris paribus*, the belligerent who is the first to obtain this advantage will (miracles excepted) win the game."*

A memorandum which appears to have been submitted to the Secretary by General Hull, soon afterwards contains this warning:

"If, Sir, we cannot command the ocean, we can command the lakes of our country. This we ought to do; but if there is no intention of building a naval force on the lakes superior to that of the British, that communication must be abandoned until we take possession of the Canadas."†

But the boastful declarations of the advocates of war, both in and out of Congress, that the militia of Kentucky or Ohio alone, could, and would, take Canada, seem to have impressed their government so strongly that it preferred to put its trust for the time in its land forces alone, which promised at least a superiority in numbers that seemed overwhelming. General Hull's discomfiture, succeeded by other disasters, convinced the President and his advisers of their mistake, and several hundred seamen, accompanied by a large body of shipwrights, were despatched to the lakes.

At the Black Rock shipyard they found the merchant schooners *Catharine* and *Amelia*, and sloop *Contractor*, to which was soon added the prize brig *Caledonia*. These vessels were rapidly fitted out as gun-boats, and armed with those heavy long guns which had already proved so effective at sea.

These preparations soon became known to Sir George Prevost, and caused him much uneasiness, as his correspondence with Lord Bathurst shows. On October 26th he asked for the appointment of a captain in the Royal Navy to superintend the "naval establishment" on the lakes.

*Armstrong, "Notices of the War of 1812," I., 235.

† "Canadian Archives," C. 676.

On November 5th he wrote that the Government of the United States had sent the crew of the frigate *John Adams* to man its vessel, and begged for officers and crews for the British ships. On the 21st of the same month he announced that the Americans were actually in command of Lake Ontario, and had menaced Kingston. He predicted the entire loss of that lake next year if he was not powerfully assisted with men and stores. But such was the uncertainty of the mail service in the winter season that this letter did not reach Lord Bathurst until March 3rd, 1813, one hundred and one days after it was written. At the same time, fearing that assistance from Great Britain might arrive too late, Prevost applied to Sir John B. Warren, commanding on the Halifax station, for at least a sufficient number of officers and men to navigate the ships on the lakes. In January, 1813, Captain Hall went to Quebec to enlist seamen for Lake Erie. He met with little success, owing largely to the high rate of wages then being paid in the merchant service, and the men he obtained were generally of an unsatisfactory description, being incompetent and dissipated. At the same time instructions were given to General Procter to build at Amherstburg a ship intended to carry fourteen twelve-pound carronades, and four long nines in bridle ports, in the bow and stern, and two decked gunboats, to be armed each with a long eighteen. With the exception of timber, which could be procured close at hand, the principal part of the materials—nails, bolts, pulleys, deadeyes, lead, copper, glass, paint, resin, cordage and sails would have to be sent up from Montreal or Quebec with the shipwrights.

"There are not shipwrights in this province to do half the work," Captain Gray reported on December 3rd, 1812. "It might, under those circumstances, be advisable to engage all the master shipwrights in Lower Canada with their men, and send them up to work by contract or otherwise."

There was even greater difficulty in providing guns and ordnance stores. Six carronades destined for the *Queen Charlotte* had been taken to arm gunboats on the Sorel and St. Lawrence. There were none in the arsenals at Quebec or Halifax. Prevost quite unexpectedly succeeded in purchasing eighteen old carronades from a Québec merchant, but these were appropriated forthwith for the armament of the ships at Kingston, and those needed for Lake Erie had then to be requisitioned from England. By the middle of March only eighty seamen of the most wretched quality had entered for service on both lakes, and the Governor-General was obliged to forward a most urgent requisition to the Colonial Office for 443 seamen for Lake Ontario and 170 for Lake Erie. But

even had the full number been sent out, a return showed that the Lake Erie squadron would still be far short of its complement.* The result of his repeated appeals may be traced in Lord Bathurst's despatches. On December 9th, 1812, he announced that 200 seamen had been ordered to proceed to Quebec for service on the lakes, chiefly composed of those who had lately manned the flotilla at Riga and were supposed, in consequence, to be already acclimated. On January 13th, 1813, he wrote that the number had been increased to 300, and on March 12th to 450. Finally on August 14th, when of course it was too late to avert disaster on Lake Erie, he informed Prevost that 300 additional seamen would be sent from England and that Admiral Warren would be instructed to lend him 300 more to be employed on the lakes.

Meanwhile the Government of the United States was making determined efforts to equip a squadron competent to gain possession of Lake Erie as a preliminary to the recovery of Detroit. Presqu' Isle (lately re-named Erie) was selected as the best place for building vessels of war as having a spacious and landlocked harbour, with "a sufficiency of water on the bar to let them into the lake, but not a sufficiency to let heavy armed vessels of the enemy into the bay to destroy them."† A large body of militia could also be easily assembled from the adjacent country for their protection. In the beginning of January, 1813, Commodore Chauncey, with Eckford, his naval constructor, visited the place and approved of the work already done on two gunboats and gave instructions for the construction of two large flush-decked brigs or corvettes of the class of the *Wasp* and *Hornet*, which had won such notable victories on the ocean. A considerable body of ship-carpenters and axemen had already been at work for some time, and these were reinforced about March 1st by another party sent for the purpose from New York. Chauncey designated for the command Captain Oliver Hazard Perry, lately in command of a flotilla of gunboats at Newport, R.I., an energetic young officer who had seen some active service in the war with Tripoli ten years before as a midshipman but was not otherwise distinguished. He brought with him to Erie one hundred of his best seamen, about the end of March, and found that besides the two brig corvettes, a clipper schooner and three gunboats had been already laid down. The difficulties of building, although great, were decidedly less there than on the Canadian shore. There was no lack of skilled labour as the private shipyards of the United States were absolutely idle. Pittsburg, his base

*Returns by Captain P. L. Chambers, D.A.Q.M.G., dated at Amherstburg, March, 1813. Total complement required 470 officers and men. Present, 108—short 379. "Can. Arch. Provincial Marine."

†Capt. D. Dobbins to Capt. Elliott, Oct. 11th, 1812.

of supplies, was much nearer than Montreal and conveyance by water was practicable nearly all the way. Large boats loaded with artillery and naval stores ascended the Alleghany river, French, Deadwater and Muddy Creeks to the site of Fort Le Bœuf, now Waterford. Thence there was a passable wagon road to Erie. The work of construction accordingly proceeded rapidly. There is a wide disagreement among American writers as to the size of the brigs. Mr. Bancroft states that they were 141 feet in length and measured 500 tons, while Captain Dobbins says that they were 110 feet in length between perpendiculars, thirty feet beam and measured 260 tons. The new *Wasp* is admitted to have measured more than 500 tons, and it seems probable that on this point Bancroft is nearly correct. They were pierced for twenty guns in broadside, besides two stern ports, and being intended to carry thirty-two pound carronades their frames and sides were made uncommonly stout and thick. Redoubts were thrown up and guns mounted to command the harbour's mouth. A body of two thousand volunteers and militia was assembled for the protection of the place.

Early in May the schooners *Ariel*, *Porcupine*, *Scorpion* and *Tigress* were launched, and on the 24th of the same month the two brigs were put afloat. In addition to these vessels the prize brig *Caledonia* and five merchant schooners lying at the Black Rock ship-yard had been purchased and equipped for war, but were prevented from entering the lake by the batteries opposite. On May 28th, however, Fort Erie was evacuated and the whole line of the Niagara abandoned by the British forces. No time was then lost in removing the blockaded vessels but six days were consumed in towing them up the river and it was not until June 13th that they were enabled to sail from Buffalo, heavily freighted with naval stores.

The two small gunboats whose construction had been authorized by the Governor-General, were built on the Thames near Chatham and launched early in April, but small progress was made on the new ship at Amherstburg owing both to the lack of workmen and materials.

Lieutenants Frederick Rolette and Robert Irvine, Midshipmen Robert Richardson and Thomas Bawis, two petty officers and twenty-two seamen of the Provincial Marine were engaged in the action on the River Raisin on January 22nd, 1813, when they were employed in working the field guns. One seaman was killed, both lieutenants, midshipman Richardson, one gunner and twelve seamen were wounded, leaving only eleven persons unhurt in a party of twenty-eight.

On April 23rd a flotilla composed of the *Lady Prevost*, *General*

Hunter, *Chippewa*, the new gunboats *Eliza* and *Colonel Myers*, and transports *Mary*, *Nancy*, and *Miamis*, under the command of Captain Hall, conveyed General Procter's division to the mouth of the Miami river where the troops were landed. The gunboats ascended the river until within easy range of Fort Meigs. Part of the seamen were landed to assist in manning the siege batteries, and were said by Procter to have rendered the most essential service, although they suffered no loss in action.

After the siege was raised, the *Hunter* was despatched with provisions and stores to Mackinac where the garrison was almost starving, and the *Queen Charlotte* was sent for supplies to Fort Erie as Procter's whole division was then in great distress for lack of both food and clothing. The want of seamen absolutely prohibited any offensive operation.

"Our gunboats are now idle," Procter wrote on May 23rd, "for want of hands. We are endeavouring to man one. They might have been made good use of if we had had sailors since we left Miami in intercepting supplies for Mr. Harrison, which, as Colonel Nichol observes, he can now receive by the lake only."

Rumours that ships of war were being built at Erie had reached him some time before and rendered him so uneasy that he attempted to secure information by sending spies down the south shore of the lake.

Sir John Warren had responded to the Governor-General's appeal for officers by sending him Captains Robert Heriot Barclay, Robert Fionis, and Daniel Pring and four lieutenants of the Royal Navy. Captain Barclay was thirty-two years of age and had lost his left arm in the service but had not particularly distinguished himself, although undoubtedly brave and skilful. None of the other officers were in any way known to fame. Barclay arrived at Kingston early in May and took charge of the ships lying there without crews. A few days later he was superseded by Sir James Lucas Yeo who came directly from England with thirty-six officers and 450 seamen to assume the command on both lakes. Yeo offered the command of the Lake Erie squadron to Captain William Howe Mulcaster, with whom he had been closely associated for many years. Mulcaster declined, chiefly, it is hinted, in consequence of the miserable equipment of the vessels and deficiency of seamen. It was then tendered to Barclay who accepted without hesitation, possibly from reluctance to serve under Yeo who was several years younger than himself.

The American fleet was in possession of Lake Ontario, and as it was

understood to be considerably superior in guns and men, and as the result of the contest there was justly felt to be of supreme importance, Yeo absolutely refused to part with any of the officers or seamen who had come with him from England. Barclay was accordingly obliged to proceed to his post accompanied only by three lieutenants, a surgeon, a master's mate and nineteen seamen, twelve of whom were French Canadians. At York they overtook a detachment of the 8th on its way in boats to join General Vincent at Niagara. On May 27th, when within twenty miles of Fort George, they learned that Vincent had been driven from his position, and marched overland to join him at De Cew's Falls. Next day it was ascertained that the *Queen Charlotte* which had been lying under Point Abino, had gone up the lake to avoid an attack, and they were obliged to undertake the toilsome overland journey to Amherstburg, where they arrived about June 10th.

The ship on the stocks at that place was still in a very backward state from want of the most necessary stores, as nearly everything intended for her equipment had been either taken or destroyed when the Americans captured York. But on June 16th he succeeded in manning the *Queen Charlotte* and *Lady Prevost* and sailed down the south shore to reconnoitre the harbour of Erie. He ascertained that it was well protected by batteries and blockhouses garrisoned by about 2,000 men, and that the two brigs had their lower masts in.

"The only thing I can hope for," he wrote despairingly, "is that reinforcements will be sent to Brigadier General Procter to enable me to destroy the American vessels before they are ready. . . . I expected to find four companies of the 41st at Long Point, and found only one."* As Barclay cruised down the lake from Long Point towards Buffalo, Perry with his five vessels was moving slowly upwards, hugging the south shore. Off the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek the ships of both were distinctly seen, when about fourteen miles apart, by the crew of a small boat midway between them. The day was hazy and Barclay passed on without observing the American flotilla. Perry considered this a very fortunate escape for him, but it is doubtful whether the two British vessels were sufficiently manned to have risked an attack. On June 19th and 20th Perry took his ships across the bar into the harbour of Erie where they were out of danger. He had received a letter from the Secretary of the Navy directing him to name one of his new brigs the *Lawrence* in honour of the dead captain of the *Chesapeake*, and the other *Niagara*, to commemorate their recent success on that frontier.

*Barclay to Prevost, June 17th, 1813, "Canadian Archives."

On the 28th Barclay again reconnoitred the harbour and ascertained that the two new brigs were still in the inner harbour, apparently in a forward state but not yet rigged. Besides these he noted two smaller brigs and seven schooners, all of which appeared to be armed, manned and ready for sea. Next day he wrote from Long Point to the Governor-General, complaining warmly of the want of seamen and stores. "The ships," he said, "are manned with crews, part of whom cannot even speak English, and none of them seamen and very few in numbers."

In fact, nearly every letter written by Procter or Barclay at this time contained an anxious appeal for seamen and soldiers to carry out the proposed attack upon the harbour of Erie before the American squadron could put to sea.

On June 10th Procter had written, "I am very anxious to have our new vessel in the water where she will be much safer. Every effort should be made to send us seamen before the vessels at Presque Isle are ready. If reinforced I shall have some confidence."*

On the 15th he said, "I am fully aware that the enemy are not idle at Sackett's Harbour, neither are they, I apprehend, at Presque Isle. Capt. Barclay is endeavouring to ascertain their real state. I am surprised they have not appeared on this lake. We are well aware of the necessity of giving the first blow, indeed we owe everything to our having done so. Captain Barclay has, I believe, written urgently to Sir James Yeo on the necessity of our having seamen without delay."†

On the 29th, Procter informed Captain McDouall that "the *Detroit* will be launched in a fortnight. We could lend her guns," he added, "if she had seamen. I believe now that Captain Barclay is making some attempt on the enemy's vessels. We had proposed making an attempt with all our means, but I suppose he saw and learned that an immediate attempt was most eligible."‡

But the promised troops did not come and nothing could be done without them. On July 4th General Procter wrote to Captain McDouall that the detention of "the force ordered here by the commander of the forces has prevented this district from being in a state of security, which the destruction of the enemy's vessels at Presque Isle would have effected, a service that might very easily have been completely effected a

*"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 110.

†"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 107.

‡"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 155.

very short time since, but which, I apprehend, may now be attended with much difficulty.”*

In a letter of the same date to Prevost he said, “I beg to add that if I had received from the Niagara line the reinforcement which you directed should be sent, I should by this time have had it in my power by the destruction of the enemy’s vessels in the harbour of Presque Isle to have placed the dockyard and post of Amherst in a state of security that under existing circumstances it cannot be said they are in at present. However, though certainly more difficult to be effected, it may not be too late if agreeable to requisition, the remainder of the 41st Regiment are immediately sent to Long Point. There seems to have been with the Provincial Marine a general error which cannot rest with me as I early reported to Sir R. H. Sheaffe that an entire change was as requisite on this as the lower lake. Captain Barclay also arrived here in error. I am confident of the most cordial co-operation and aid from Captain Barclay whose arrival lessened considerably my anxiety. I have to transmit a letter from him to me for your Excellency’s consideration. I have also to mention his strong desire to have some more of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment as his greatest reliance is on those of that corps at present employed as marines.”†

General De Rottenburg who commanded the division engaged in blockading the American army at Fort George positively declined to co-operate in the proposed expedition against Erie and on July 11th, Procter wrote again.

“By my brigade major I also was informed that the Major General could not act with me and Captain Barclay at present; that he must first secure the command of the lower lake after which there will be no difficulty in recovering the command of the upper one? With all due deference I beg leave to dissent from the above. If means had been afforded me which were no more than your Excellency has repeatedly directed should be sent me, I could in all probability have effected the destruction of the enemy’s vessels at Presque Isle and have secured the superiority of this lake and also in so doing have made a powerful diversion in favour of the Centre Division. I am further of opinion if we lose the superiority of this lake it will not be recovered without much difficulty.

Captain Barclay with all his resources goes to Long Point to bring Lieut. Col. Evans and in the hope of finding naval stores there, and sailors.

*“Canadian Archives,” C. 679, p. 177.

†“Canadian Archives,” C. 679, p. 181.

If the enemy's vessels should be out an engagement cannot be avoided and if they are not yet ready he will endeavour to keep them in the harbour. Besides the detachment of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment I have been obliged to send fifty men on board the vessels from the 41st Regiment and some of the detachment under Lieut. Col. Evans will also be detained from necessity."*

Two days later he added :—

"I have already acquainted Your Excellency that Captain Barclay was to set sail with all his vessels for Long Point where he is to embark Lieut. Col. Evans and one hundred men of the 41st Regiment and in the event of the enemy's vessels being still in the harbour of Presque Isle to keep them there until I can send him assistance which can be done soon if sailors are sent immediately as I can find guns that will sufficiently arm the *Detroit* until those intended for her shall arrive. The *Detroit* will be launched in two days which I am extremely anxious for as she will then in every respect be in much greater security than on the stocks. I beg leave to observe that even an hundred seamen pushed on here immediately would in all probability secure the superiority of this lake, at all events enable us to appear on it until further efforts may be made. I am already weakened on shore by my efforts to enable Captain Barclay to appear on the lake. If he should receive an hundred seamen, I shall be necessitated to send more soldiers on board the vessels to endeavour to supply the deficiency he labours under in respect to the number and quality of his sailors Three hundred sailors are requisite to man His Majesty's vessels on the lake.†

Nor was Captain Barclay less plain spoken and insistent in his demands for aid. Writing after his arrival at Long Point on July 16th, he said :—

"I enclose a statement of the force of the rival squadrons and if prompt assistance is not sent, although my officers and crews will do everything that zeal and intrepidity can do, the great superiority of the enemy may prove fatal. The *Detroit* will be ready to launch on the 20th inst but there is neither a sufficient quantity of ordnance ammunition or other stores and not a man to put in her. If that vessel was on the lake I would feel confident as to any action they might choose to risk for the present although for

* "Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 220.

† "Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 224.

the good of His Majesty's Province I must attack, I cannot help saying that it is possible they may have an advantage, though I trust not a decided one.

"I have communicated with Sir J. Yeo on the same subject and if the exigencies of the service on Lake Ontario will not admit of his sending many seamen, even 50 would be of the greatest service at present but it will require at least 250 or 300 seamen to render His Majesty's squadron perfectly effective."*

The return enclosed showed that his squadron then consisted of the *Queen Charlotte* of 18 guns manned by forty French and English Canadians, twenty-five of the Newfoundland Regiment and forty-five of the 41st Regiment; the *Lady Prevost* of twelve guns manned by thirty Canadians, ten Newfoundlanders, and thirty-six of the 41st Regiment; the *Hunter* of six guns, twenty Canadians, four Newfoundlanders and fifteen of the 41st Regiment; the *Erie* and *Little Belt*, each of two guns, with a crew of six Canadians, four Newfoundlanders and five of the 41st Regiment. The *Chippewa* of two guns had been left with General Procter. Barclay's available force consisted accordingly of five vessels carrying forty guns and 255 men for which Perry's two large brigs alone would be more than a match. At Long Point, however, he took on board seventy men of the 41st Regiment without whom he declared he would be unable to work his ships at all and sailed to blockade Erie as long as possible.

Whatever hopes they may have still entertained of effective assistance must have been dispelled by the Governor-General's very unsatisfactory replies. On June 20th, writing from Kingston he announced to Procter that he had given directions to General De Rottenburg to push on the remainder of the 41st Regiment and advised him to "encourage as much as possible the exertions of the navy; bring forward the united power to both services to crush the enemy's endeavours to obtain the ascendancy on Lake Erie when a favourable opportunity presents itself."† But on July 11th, he rather curtly informed him that the "ordnance and ordnance stores you require must be taken from the enemy whose resources on Lake Erie must become yours. I am much mistaken if you do not find Captain Barclay well disposed to play that game."<‡

Perry's squadron was fully armed and equipped by July 10th, but he

*"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 197.

†"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 113.

‡Ibid, C. 679, p. 216.

wisely refused to take the lake until provided with a sufficient complement of able seamen. The number then at his disposal is not stated but must have been at least thrice as many as Barclay had, though he was no doubt unaware of his opponent's weakness in this essential respect. He is said to have brought 152 from Newport but of these one-third were detained for service at Sackett's Harbour. Fifty-five were detailed to his assistance by Chauncey on May 29th and there must have been some at the navy yards at Black Rock and Erie before he took command. A recruiting station had been established at Erie and over one hundred ordinary seamen and landsmen besides forty marines had been enlisted. His command is said to have suffered much from disease but he must have had nearly three hundred seamen of all descriptions when Barclay appeared off the port on July 19th. His crews could no doubt have been easily completed with boatmen, soldiers, and militia but Perry would not consent to do this and risk defeat. The British squadron passed and repassed the harbour's mouth and in the afternoon disappeared in the direction of Long Point. On the 21st it returned and ran in close enough to exchange shots with the gunboats inside.

"It is a most mortifying situation for me," Perry wrote to General P. B. Porter, "my vessels being ready and no men being forwarded for them while an enemy of inferior force in vessels and guns are blockading us."

"Conceive of my feelings," he said in a letter to Chauncey, "An enemy within striking distance, my vessels ready and not men enough to man them. Going out with those I now have is out of the question. You would not suffer it, were you here."

Two days later Sailing-master Champlin arrived with seventy men. Letter after letter from the Secretary of War and from General Harrison were received urging immediate co-operation with the army advancing upon Detroit but Perry still firmly refused to move until supplied with satisfactory crews. "The vessels are all ready to meet the enemy," he informed Chauncey, "the moment they are officered and manned. Our sails are bent, provisions on board, and in fact everything is ready." In the same letter he sharply criticised the quality of the men lately sent him whom he described as "a motley set, blacks, soldiers, and boys." Chauncey sent the officers and men demanded but retorted that he "had yet to learn that the color of the skin can affect a man's qualification or usefulness. I have nearly fifty blacks on board of this ship and many of them are among my best men." The tone of his letter

offended Perry so much that he requested the Secretary of War to remove him to some other station as "he could not serve longer under an officer who had been so totally regardless of his feelings."

On the 28th Barclay was obliged to abandon the blockade by stress of weather and lack of provisions, although he had perceived that the Americans had "everything near ready for hauling their vessels over the bar. When this is done," he admitted, "we must retire to Amherstburg."* The frequently repeated tale that he stated that he expected to find the enemy fast on the bar on his return must be dismissed as purely fictitious. On the contrary, he appears to have abandoned all hope of detaining them in that port, and informed General De Rottenburg that as soon as the sailors he still expected should arrive he would proceed to join General Procter, whom he hoped to find at Sandusky Bay, where he intended to land his soldiers, and then go on to Amherstburg to equip the *Detroit*. Finding that no seamen were on the march to join him, he again stood across the lake towards Erie on August 5th, and discovering that the American squadron was out of the harbour, bore away for Amherstburg.

On the following day Perry crossed the lake to Long Point with eight vessels, and returned to Erie, where he was joined on the 9th by Captain J. D. Elliott with eight officers and a hundred seamen from Lake Ontario. Chauncey, it appears, was able to supply Perry from time to time with drafts of men without weakening his force materially, while Yeo was unable to do anything for Barclay without risking the loss of his squadron.

Writing to Prevost on August 9th, Procter announced his repulse at Sandusky, and added, "The enemy's vessels are out of Presqu'Isle harbour, and so decidedly stronger than ours that Captain Barclay has been necessitated to return to Amherstburg with all haste to get the new vessel ready for sea, which she will be in eight or ten days, and then only want hands. Whatever may happen to be regretted may be fairly attributed to the delays in sending here the force your Excellency directed should be sent. Had it been sent at once, it could have been used to the greatest advantage, but it arrived in such small portions, and with such delays, that the opportunities have been lost. . . . You will probably hear of the enemy's landing shortly at Long Point, whence they may gain the rear of the Centre Division, and also affect my supplies. An hundred and fifty sailors would have effectually obviated this evil."†

*Can. Arch., C. 679, p. 517.

†"Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 371.

On the 18th he informed the Governor-General that the *Detroit* was ready, "and, if we had seamen a few hours would place this district in security, which, it is incumbent on me to say, is not the case under present circumstances. My force must be still more divided on the advance of the enemy, and, as I man the fleet, my loss must be great. I entreat your Excellency to send me the means of continuing the contest. I do not expect the least assistance from the Centre Division. The fleet drops down to the bar this evening or early to-morrow morning, as the best situation to meet the enemy's vessels. Should a landing be attempted, it will not be possible to avoid the risk of an action tho' without seamen, and the enemy's vessels well manned.*

As he had not yet received any reply to his letter of June 24th from Sir J. B. Warren, Prevost had by that time determined, as a last resort, to lay up the troop-ship *Dover* at Quebec, and send most of her crew to the lakes. This decision was made known to Procter in a letter dated at St. David's on August 22nd.

"I have the satisfaction," he wrote, "to inform you, that the first lieutenant of that ship, with 50 or 60 seamen, are now at Kingston, from whence they will be forwarded, without delay, to Amherstburg. You will make this circumstance known to Captain Barclay. You will not fail in forwarding frequent and very particular details of the state of public affairs in the Western District, as the movement I have made to this from the centre of operations has arisen, in a great measure, from my anxiety respecting your situation, and altho' it may be one of some difficulty, you cannot fail in honourably surmounting it, notwithstanding the numerical superiority of the enemy's force, which I cannot but consider as overbalanced by the excellent description of your troops and seamen valourous and well disciplined.

"The experience obtained by Sir James Yeo's conduct towards a fleet infinitely superior to the one under his command, will satisfy Captain Barclay that he has only to dare, and the enemy is discomfited."†

Such a letter could not fail to wound the feelings of both Barclay and Procter, when they had begged for assistance in vain for months, and we accordingly find the latter replying on the 26th.

"Your Excellency speaks of seamen valourous and well disciplined. Except, I believe, the 25 Captain Barclay brought with him, there are

* "Canadian Archives," C. 679, p. 447.

† "Canadian Archives," C. 679.

none of that description on this lake—at least on board His Majesty's vessels. There are scarcely enough, and of a miserable description, to work the vessels, some of which cannot be used for want of hands, such even as we have. I have the highest opinion of Captain Barclay, and have afforded him every aid I possibly could. . . . Captain Barclay has, besides the Royal Newf'dland, one hundred and fifty of the 41st Regt., better soldiers they cannot be, but they are only landsmen. . . .

I will venture to offer my opinion to Your Excellency, that as long as Captain Barclay, without seamen, can avoid the enemy, he should do so. All my ordnance is on board, except the field, and in the event of any disaster to the fleet, the arrival of any body of seamen would be of no use whatever. Seamen should be pushed on even by dozens.”*

The day before, Perry's squadron had left its anchorage among the Bass Islands, where great numbers of boats were being collected for the transportation of troops, and after reconnoitering Amherstburg dropped down the lake about twenty miles to a settlement on the Canadian side, where they seemed to contemplate landing. But two or three days later it again disappeared, and was supposed to have gone to Long Point.

“I can assure Your Excellency,” Procter wrote on the 29th, “that every effort is making to have the fleet as effective as possible, especially in rendering the men expert at the guns, and that on the arrival of the officers and seamen, offensive operations will commence, tho' I must say, because I know it to be the case, that the supply of both officers and seamen is very inadequate. Your Excellency is not aware that the state of the Provincial Marine here was scarcely better than that on Lake Ontario, which it has been found requisite to lay aside. Interested individuals have prevented this truth from appearing, that the *Navy* might not be on this lake. I informed Major-General Sheaffe that the change was equally requisite here. I look on Captain Barclay's arrival here, tho' late, as a fortunate circumstance. I should have been very averse to sending soldiers on board but with officers of the Royal Navy. I feel it a duty incumbent on me to state circumstances as they really are. There are not on the fleet more than four-and-twenty *seamen* . . .

.
I entreat your Excellency to direct more sailors to be sent to this lake.”†

Barclay wrote Yeo on September 1st :—

* “Canadian Archives,” C. 679, p. 494.

† “Canadian Archives,” C. 679, p. 504.

"By exercising the soldiers at the guns, I hope they will make a good hand of it. I trust you will add to the men of the *Dover*. The quantity of beef and biscuit consumed here is enormous, as there are such hordes of Indians with their wives and children. I am sure, if you saw my Canadians, you would condemn every one, with perhaps one or two exceptions, as a poor devil not worth his salt."

On the very day this was written, Yeo had landed two lieutenants, two gunners, and forty-five seamen, at Burlington, for the Lake Erie squadron, with twelve 24-pounder carronades, intended for the armament of the *Detroit*. The guns went no further, but the seamen, commanded by Lieut. George Bignall, late of the *Dover*, arrived at Amherstburg on the 6th, much fatigued by the journey. In this detachment there were no less than sixteen boys, and probably none of the seamen were very efficient in gunnery. Barclay wrote at once to say that the number was "totally inadequate" to make his squadron effective, but "deplorably manned as it was," unless he received certain information that more seamen were on their way to join him, he would be obliged to give battle to the enemy. Bignall was put in command of the *Hunter*, and his men distributed among all the vessels, so as to give a few of the best seamen to each.

Having waited in vain until the evening of the 9th, when there was no longer a single day's flour in store, and both troops and seamen had already been placed on half allowance of other articles, with the exception of spirits, of which there was so little that it was entirely reserved for the day of battle, after consulting with General Procter and obtaining his consent, Barclay entered the lake with six vessels. His flagship, the *Detroit*, was armed with two long twenty-four pounders, one eighteen on a pivot, six twelves, eight nines, a twenty-four, and an eighteen-pound carronade. Most of this strange medley of guns had been taken from the ramparts of Fort Amherst, and the only means of discharging them was by snapping pistols over the touch-hole. Sails, cables, blocks, and anchors were also borrowed from the other vessels to enable the *Detroit* to take the lake. The *Queen Charlotte*, Capt. Robert Finnis, carried one long twelve on a pivot, one nine, and fourteen twenty-pound carronades. The *Lady Prevost*, Lieut. Edward Buchan, had one long nine mounted on a pivot, two sixes, and ten twelve-pound carronades. The *Hunter*, Lieut. George Bignall, mounted four sixes, two fours, and two two pounders, besides two twelve-pound carronades. The *Little Belt* carried one long twelve on a pivot, and two sixes; and the *Chippewa* a single nine-pounder on a pivot. The armament of the three latter ves-

sels was so contemptible that it scarcely deserves to be taken into consideration. Like Lord Cochrane, when he sailed in the *Speedy*, the commander of any one of them might have paced the deck with an entire broadside of shot in his pockets.

The broadside force of the squadron accordingly consisted of twenty long guns, ranging in calibre from two to twenty-four pounders, throwing in the aggregate 195 pounds of shot, and fourteen carronades throwing 264 pounds.

At daybreak on the morning of the 10th the American squadron was discovered in motion among the Bass Islands, near Put-in Bay. When last seen it had been reported to consist of twelve vessels, but only nine could then be distinguished, and it was afterwards learned that the schooner *Ohio* and two tenders had been detached to obtain provisions. The brig-corvettes *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, each carried two long twelves and eighteen thirty-two-pound carronades, and were undoubtedly more than a match in close action for the whole British squadron. Perry had, besides these vessels, the brig *Caledonia*, of two long twenty-fours, and one twenty-four pound carronade; and the schooners *Ariel*, of four long twelves, *Scorpion*, one long thirty-two, and a thirty-two pound carronade; *Somers*, one long twenty-four, and a thirty-two pound carronade; *Porcupine* and *Tigress*, each a long thirty-two, and *Trippe*, a long twenty-four. All of these guns were mounted on circles, and could be fought on either side. The total broadside force of the American squadron consisted, therefore, of thirteen long guns, throwing 264 pounds of shot, and twenty-one carronades throwing 664 pounds. In the early part of the action, it is stated that the *Lawrence* and *Niagara* used both of their long guns on the engaged side.

The standard British authority, William James, submits the following comparative statement of force :—

BRITISH SQUADRON.

NAME.	Guns in Broadside.	Lbs.	Men.	Tons.
<i>Detroit</i>	10	138	50 seamen	305
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	9	189		
<i>Lady Prevost</i>	7	75	85 Canadians	120
<i>General Hunter</i>	5	30		
<i>Little Belt</i>	2	18	210 Soldiers	54
<i>Chippewa</i>	1	9		
	34	459	345	865

AMERICAN SQUADRON.

NAME.	Guns in Broadside.	Lbs.	Men.	Tons.
<i>Lawrence</i>	10	300	580	1,530
<i>Niagara</i>	10	300		
<i>Caledonia</i>	3	72		
<i>Ariel</i>	4	48		
<i>Scorpion</i>	2	64		
<i>Somers</i>	2	56		
<i>Porcupine</i>	1	32		
<i>Tigress</i>	1	32		
<i>Trippe</i>	1	24		
	34	928		

The accuracy of James, as far as the number and calibre of the guns on both sides is concerned, is admitted, with the exception that he understated the weight of metal of the American squadron by eight pounds, on the supposition that the *Caledonia* mounted three twenty-four pounders, but it is disputed by most American writers as to tonnage and the number of men. But in regard to these points they differ widely among themselves. Mr. Roosevelt is the only one who furnishes a comparative statement, which is as follows:—

AMERICAN SQUADRON.

NAME.	Tons.	Total Crew.	Crew fit for duty.	Broadside Lbs.
<i>Lawrence</i>	480	136	105	300
<i>Niagara</i>	480	155	127	300
<i>Caledonia</i>	180	53	184	80
<i>Ariel</i>	112	36		48
<i>Scorpion</i>	86	35		64
<i>Somers</i>	94	30		56
<i>Porcupine</i>	83	25		32
<i>Tigress</i>	96	27		32
<i>Trippe</i>	60	35		24
	1,671	532	(416)	936

BRITISH SQUADRON.

NAME.	Tons.	Crew.	Broadside Lbs.
<i>Detroit</i>	490	150	138
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	400	126	189
<i>Lady Prevost</i>	230	86	75
<i>Hunter</i>	180	45	30
<i>Chippewa</i>	70	15	9
<i>Little Bell</i>	90	18	18
	1,460	440	459

In another place, however, Mr. Roosevelt states that the number of Barclay's effective men "was most probably somewhat less than Perry's."^{*} Dr. Usher Parsons, the assistant surgeon of the *Niagara*, states that the crews of the American squadron consisted of about 600 men, of whom 78 were reported unfit for duty the day previous to the action. Mr. Burgess adopts this statement, while Emmons, Lossing, and Bancroft bring the number down to 490, and McAfee, who is followed by the American Secretary of War, General Armstrong, and others, further reduces it to "four hundred seamen and marines." The accuracy of Mr. Bancroft's statements may be judged from his assertion that "the British had the superiority, their vessels being stronger, and their forces more concentrated. . . . In action, at a distance, the British, who had thirty-five long guns, had greatly the advantage." Mr. Roosevelt takes the number 532, given by him from a prize list published in the American State papers, which classifies them as 320 officers and seamen, and 158 marines and soldiers, and 45 volunteers.

An official return shows that three lieutenants, an assistant surgeon, eight sergeants, four drummers, and 234 rank and file, of the Newfoundland and 41st Regiments, embarked on board Barclay's vessels.† If fifty seamen and eighty-five "Canadians" be added, as stated by James, the total number of officers and men on board must have exceeded 385.

As to the comparative size of the vessels, Mr. Cooper, who is far from being impartial, states that the "*Lawrence* and *Niagara* measured 110 feet on deck, and had more than 29 feet of moulded beam; or were of about 450 tons carpenter's measurement. Authentic accounts from the Custom house show that the *Detroit* and *Charlotte* were less than 100 feet on deck, and each had less than 27 feet beam. The *Pretext* and *Hunter* were much lighter vessels than has been generally supposed, and the armament of the last was very insignificant."‡ Mr. Roosevelt, it will be noted, ignores this evidence, and asserts that the *Detroit* was slightly larger than the *Lawrence* or *Niagara*. Mr. Dobbins, on the authority of his father's measurements, states the entire tonnage of the American squadron at only 840, and that of the British at 826, agreeing in the latter case very nearly with James. These accounts are, of course, hopelessly at variance, but there can be scarcely any doubt that the American squadron was actually much superior to the British, both in tonnage and number of men. A considerable number of the

^{*} "Naval War of 1812," p. 261.

† "Canadian Archives," Q. 123, p. 67.

‡ "Naval History" (Edition of 1846), Vol. II., p. 194—Note.

seamen had served on board the *Constitution* in her actions with the *Guerriere* and *Java*, and were considered expert gunners. Mr. Roosevelt certainly falls far short of the truth when he says that "the *Niagara* might be considered a match for the *Detroit*, and the *Lawrence* and *Caledonia* for the five other British vessels."*

The British squadron was foredoomed to defeat because of its unpreparedness. Fugitives and deserters from Canada had kept Perry well informed of the state of the British vessels, and he was, perhaps, overconfident, while Barclay knew that the odds against him were so great that scarcely anything short of a miracle could save him.

When the American squadron was first seen the wind blew gently from the southwest giving Barclay the weather gage. He at once bore up with the intention of coming to an action among the islands but the wind very soon shifted to southeast, bringing the enemy directly to windward. All that could then be done was to heave to and form line of battle heading to the southwest, "according to a given plan so that each ship might be supported against the superior force of the two brigs opposed to them."† This was in the following order, *Chippewa*, *Detroit*, *Hunter*, *Queen Charlotte*, *Lady Prevost*, *Little Belt*.

The American squadron approached slowly with a wind that was sometimes scarcely perceptible and sometimes rose to a four or five knot breeze. A light shower of rain came on, passed over, and left the sky perfectly cloudless. It was quite ten o'clock before Perry cleared the islands, and an hour later, when about three miles distant he formed his vessels into the conventional closehaunched column of attack a cable's length apart with the *Ariel* leading followed by the *Scorpion*, *Lawrence*, *Caledonia*, *Niagara*, *Somers*, *Porcupine*, *Tigress* and *Trippe*. The distance from front to rear of his column was accordingly about a mile when all the ships preserved their proper distance, and the attack was delivered obliquely at an angle of nearly fifteen degrees by which he avoided being raked fore and aft as he approached and could return the fire from the British squadron with his broadside guns trained sharply forward. He then hoisted on his flagship a blue banner bearing in large white letters the words ascribed to the dying Lawrence "Don't give up the ship!"

At fifteen minutes before noon a bugle sounded on board the *Detroit* which became the signal for three hearty cheers from the crews of the

* "Naval War of 1812," pp. 261-2.

† Barclay to Yeo, "Canadian Archives," Q. 123.

squadron. Then the flagship fired her long twenty-four at the *Lawrence* but the shot fell short. Five minutes later she found the range with the same gun and struck Perry's ship fair on the bow. *Scorpion* hove to at once and replied with her long gun but the *Lawrence* kept silently on her course until five minutes to twelve when both her twelve pounders were fired simultaneously from the two forward starboard ports. Then at noon precisely several shots were fired from her carronades which fell far short. The *Detroit* and *Chippewa* continued to direct their fire solely upon her but owing to the want of even the rude appliances for discharging the guns generally in use at that time it was necessarily slow, and only the three heaviest guns on the first named vessel could have had any material effect although the smoothness of the water favoured precision in gunnery. In fifteen minutes the *Lawrence* gained a position within canister distance, that is to say about three hundred yards from the *Detroit*, where she hove to and fired her entire broadside. By that time the *Caledonia*, *Niagara* and *Somers* had engaged the *Hunter* and *Queen Charlotte*, at first opposing a long thirty-two, two twenty-fours and two twelves to a single twelve, two nines, and two sixes and later on the *Niagara* firing all her broadside guns at such a distance that they did little or no damage. After continuing this rather unequal contest for about a quarter of an hour and observing that his assailants displayed no inclination to come any nearer until they had disabled his ship, Captain Finnis directed the master's mate to bear up, pass the *Hunter* and lay the *Queen Charlotte* on the quarter of *Lawrence* where his carronades would become effective. But just as this change of position was on the point of being successfully accomplished and before a man had been hurt on the *Queen Charlotte* a round shot from one of the American schooners instantly killed both Capt. Finnis and Lieut. S. J. Garden of the Newfoundland Regiment who commanded the troops. This was an irreparable loss and Sir James Yeo did not hesitate to say that if Finnis had lived the result of the battle would have been different; a few minutes later the first lieutenant, John Stokes, was struck senseless by a splinter. The command then fell to Lieut. Robert Irving of the Provincial Marine, a gallant young officer, who as Barclay reported "behaved with great courage but his experience was much too limited to supply the place of such an officer as Captain Finnis." The only officers then remaining to assist him were a master's mate of the Royal Navy, two boy midshipmen of the Provincial Marine, a gunner and a boatswain. Of ten seamen belonging to the *Dover* who had been assigned to this ship one had been killed and four wounded. The remainder of the crew had suffered in proportion and nearly all this loss had been inflicted by the raking fire of the *Caledonia* and two other schooners which

were absolutely out of range of the *Queen Charlotte's* guns. This ship consequently soon fell out of her new station and henceforth failed to render any material assistance to the *Detroit*. But the duel between that vessel and the *Laurence* continued at close range for more than two hours. In their eagerness to disable their principal antagonist quickly the American gunners are believed to have overloaded their carronades with shot, and either from this cause or some other, their fire was not nearly as effective as had been expected, while the British ship although so greatly overmatched in weight of metal and other respects certainly succeeded in inflicting far more injury than she received from this particular opponent, but the long guns of the *Ariel*, the *Porcupine* and even the *Caledonia* had done her much damage. Gun after gun ceased firing as they were disabled or had their crews swept away until about half-past-two the *Laurence* was entirely silenced and dropped astern while the remaining vessels continued to drift slowly ahead and to leeward with the rising wind. The destruction on board of her had been terrible. Two officers and twenty men were killed and six officers and fifty-five men wounded. Her masts were standing but every brace and bowline had been shot away. Her hull was dreadfully shattered. Most of the guns on the engaged side were dismounted, their breechings having been torn away or their carriages knocked in pieces until but one could be discharged.

At the rear of the line things were going badly with the British. Lieut. Bignall, commander of the *Hunter*, finding that the American schooners were rapidly disabling his vessel while the shot from his light guns were falling short, made sail to the front in the hope of assisting the *Chippewa*. The *Lady Prevost* and *Little Belt* were then attacked by the *Samers*, *Tigress*, *Porcupine* and *Trippe* which remained at long range and battered them deliberately to pieces with entire impunity. The *Lady Prevost* lost men rapidly and her commander, Lieut. Buchan, was disabled by a wound in the head which rendered him temporarily insane. The command then devolved upon Lieut. Rolette of the Provincial Marine who was soon afterwards severely injured in the side and badly burned by an explosion which disabled several of his crew. Finally the rudder was cut away by a round shot and the *Lady Prevost* drifted helplessly out of action to leeward. The *Little Belt* lost her commander and escaped destruction only by running to the head of the line where she was entirely out of the fight.

All this time the *Niagara* had remained in her original station, a cable's length astern of the *Caledonia* which had avoided coming within carronade distance, and consequently had effected little, although firing her two

long guns and occasionally a broadside. When finally the *Detroit* drifted astern silent and disabled, the *Caledonia* passed her to leeward and the *Niagara* coming forward with the freshening wind went to windward of her and sent a boat on board for a supply of round shot. At this Captain Perry determined to abandon his ship and transfer his flag to the *Niagara*, which was then nearly abreast of her at a distance which was variously estimated from thirty yards to half a mile, but probably did not exceed three or four hundred yards. Telling his wounded first-lieutenant, Mr. Yarnall, that he would leave him to surrender the ship he entered a boat and reached the *Niagara* in safety. When he came on deck he informed Captain Elliott that his own vessel was quite disabled, complained that he had been sacrificed and that the conduct of the schooners in keeping so far away had lost the battle. He does not appear to have accused Elliott at that time of any misconduct and the latter cordially volunteered to carry orders to the laggard vessels. The motto flag of the *Lawrence* had been either shot away or hauled down and dropped overboard, where it was found floating by Purser McGrath who commanded the boat from the *Niagara*, and her colours were struck soon after Perry's departure, when it is said by one account only nine, and by others fourteen or eighteen unwounded men remained on board.

Finding that the *Niagara* had received comparatively little injury, Perry hoisted the signal for close action and bore down directly for the centre of the British squadron, which was then huddled in a disorderly group about their flagship. When his ship gained the weather bow of the *Detroit*, he fired a broadside, and Captain Barclay, who had already received a severe contusion on the hip, was stretched senseless on the deck by a shot which tore away his remaining arm and part of his shoulder blade. His hurt was supposed to be mortal and he was carried below. First-Lieutenant Garland had been mortally wounded early in the day, and Second-Lieutenant George Inglis took Barclay's place on the quarterdeck. As most of the larboard guns were disabled he tried to wear ship to avoid being raked and to bring the other broadside to bear, but the *Queen Charlotte* running up to leeward at that moment, the two ships fell foul and remained for some time unable to reply to the raking fire of the *Niagara* with a single gun. Perry's ship then passed through the British squadron firing her port broadside into the *Chippewa*, *Little Belt* and *Lady Prevost*, and her starboard guns into the entangled *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, which she then engaged close to leeward within pistol shot. These two ships were cut off and practically surrounded by the American squadron. The *Scorpion* on their weather

bow, the *Ariel* nearly abeam, the *Caledonia* on their weather quarter, the *Somers*, *Tigress* and *Porcupine* nearly astern, the *Trippe* on their lee quarter and the *Niagara* on their lee bow concentrated all their fire on these hapless vessels. They are said to have suffered still more from the deliberate gunnery of the schooners than from the more hurried broadsides of the *Niagara*. "The efficiency of the gunboats was fully proved in this action," writes an eyewitness, "and the sterns of all the prizes bear ample testimony of the fact. They took raking positions and galled the enemy severely. The *Lady Prevost* lost twelve men before either of the brigs fired on her."*

When at length the *Detroit* got clear, Inglis directed the *Queen Charlotte* to shoot ahead if possible, and attempted to back the foretop-sail to get astern when he found his ship completely unmanageable. A few minutes later the *Queen Charlotte* hauled down her colours. The *Detroit* was then exposed to the whole fire of all the American vessels, raking her ahead and astern. The mizen-topmast and gaff had fallen, the other masts were badly wounded, most of the stays and braces were cut away, the hull was much shattered and many guns had been disabled. Seven or eight of the ten experienced seamen were killed or wounded, and more than half of the entire crew had fallen at their stations. In this situation, on being hailed from the *Niagara*, Inglis replied that he would surrender and the other vessels rapidly followed his example.

The beaten squadron had been fought to the last extremity beyond a doubt. "The sides of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*," said an eyewitness, "were shattered from bow to stern; there was scarcely room to place one's hand on their larboard sides without touching the impression of a shot, a great many shot cannister and grape were found lodged in their bulwarks, which were too thick to be penetrated by our carronades unless within pistol shot distance. Their masts were so much shattered that they fell overboard soon after they got into the bay."†

Every commanding officer and second in command of the British vessels had fallen. In all forty-one officers and men had been killed and ninety-four wounded. The loss of the American squadron was officially stated at twenty-seven killed and ninety-six wounded, of whom two killed and twenty-seven wounded were reported on board the *Niagara*. This seems to have been understated, as Lieutenant Montgomery declared on the court-martial of Captain Elliott that the total loss on the *Niagara* was thirty-three or thirty-four and an affidavit was put in, made by Dr. Barton, the surgeon, which stated that "the exact

*Brown, "Views of the Campaign of the North-Western Army," pp. 90-1.

†Brown, "Views of N. W. Campaign," 1813, p. 89.

number, including those dangerously wounded, was twenty-seven, and the slight cases not reported must have amounted to six or eight more—that five were killed during the action and a few died soon after.”

The chances of war had throughout favoured the American squadron. There was first the sudden change of wind which gave it the weather gage, then the death of Captain Finnis, and finally the fouling of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*. Even Mr. Roosevelt feels bound to admit that “if the victory had not been so complete it might have been said that the length of the combat and the trifling disparity in loss reflected more credit on the British.”

The results of the battle were of the highest importance. The control of the upper lakes passed over to the victors. General Procter was forced to retreat from Amherstburg and owing to his indecision and unpardonable negligence was overtaken and routed.

But considerable as these advantages were, much greater were confidently expected. “Mackinac passes into our hands of course,” said a writer in *Niles' Weekly Register*. “St. Joseph's, too remote for intelligence or succour from the enemy, is given into our possession. All the places of deposit for Indian supplies will be broken up, and the savages employed in the *business* of the British during the summer and cut off at this critical season from their accustomed resources must perish by thousands for want of food and clothing. The trade of the North-West Company, a mighty mercantile establishment of vital importance to Canada and of great consideration to the Mother Country, is done. In less than four weeks we may have the reality of the things here anticipated.”

But these expectations were all doomed to remain unfulfilled. Most of the Indians with Procter joined the Centre Division of the British army at Burlington and took part in General Drummond's winter campaign. Others having already returned westward arrayed themselves again under Dickson's leadership next year. On the lakes misfortune attended every movement of the Americans. Four of their vessels, the *Ariel*, *Chippewa*, *Trippe* and *Little Belt* were destroyed at the capture of Buffalo (December 31st, 1813). An expedition against Mackinac was repulsed with severe loss (August 4th, 1814). Two schooners, the *Porcupine* and *Somers*, were captured, by boats off Fort Erie (August 11th, 1814), and two others, the *Scorpion* and *Tigress*, left to blockade Mackinac were taken in a similar manner on September 3rd and 4th. Practically the only service of much consequence performed by the American squadron was the conveyance of a body of troops to Long Point (May 14th, 1814), and covering the landing of a division of their army at Fort Erie (July 3rd, 1814).— *finis*.



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